

# MICROCOSM



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**Copiah-Lincoln Junior College**

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## THE HIGH SCHOOL COLLECTION

Since the spring of 1973, high school students in Copiah-Lincoln Junior College's district have had the opportunity to enter an annual literary competition sponsored by the Division of Humanities. The teachers in the division and the students on the MICROCOSM staff feel that this competition gives the high school students a challenge to write well and a small outlet for their writing. Each year we are encouraged by the response of the high schools in the district; yet, each year we hope that the following year more high schools will choose to enter the competition. One goal of MICROCOSM is to have at least five entries from each high school in the district.

The MICROCOSM staff has found the old adage "everyone has a story to tell" to be very evident from the number of short story entries. There was a deluge of short stories and poetry — some true to life, others entirely fantasy. The staff also received a number of informal and formal essays. We received two dramas from the high schools. Every entry — whether short story, poetry, drama, or essay — displayed creativity of each individual's own thoughts.

MICROCOSM, because of lack of space, is unable to publish the following winning entries in the junior division:

### Short Story

- "And the Mind Reels On" ..... Ralf Albritton  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (second)
- "A Case of Loving" ..... Beth Criss  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (third)
- "The Quagmire Man" ..... Linda Bachman  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (honorable mention)

### Informal Essay

- "Traits of Scholars" ..... Lori Horton  
Natchez, Adams County Christian School (second)

### Formal Essay

- "Hemingway versus Faulkner on Style and Technique" .....  
Bigi Malsbury  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven Academy (second)
- "Our Growing Problem" ..... Tom Welch  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (third)

### Drama

- "Starting All Over" ..... Teresa M. Smith  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (second)

### Poetry

- "Without A Sound" ..... Ann Vines  
Adams County Christian School (third)
- "RobinStrasse" ..... Kimberly Baskin  
Brookhaven, Brookhaven High School (honorable mention)
- "The Snow" ..... Beki Pace  
Adams County Christian School (honorable mention)

# *Once In The Park*

There were  
bubbles born in fierce abandonment  
blown joyously into the wind  
and kids were screaming  
at the sky  
or the grass  
or whatever was in the way

and the smiles on our teeth were real  
for we were just kids

Happy  
in the knowledge of our innocence.

You should have seen the balloons!  
Where they touched  
the sky they  
pierced the clouds  
with color

And our delight at their beauty  
was  
immeasurable  
for the smiles on our teeth  
were  
real

for we were just kids

Happy  
in the knowledge  
of our innocence.

**Beki Pace**  
**First Place Poetry**  
**Adams County Christian School**

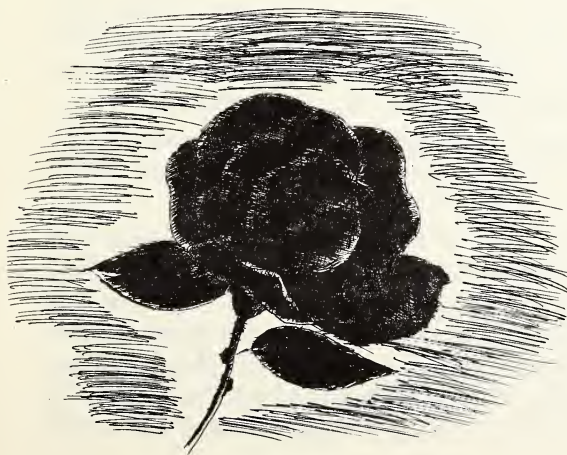
# *Humphrey G. Pearson*

## *Died In The Fall*

Humphrey G. Pearson died in the fall;  
No one came to mourn his passing.  
His only eulogy was the spadefuls of dirt pounding on the coffin.  
No one sent flowers to relieve the desolation;  
His own garden behind his house withered and died.  
The mayor of the town died in the winter;  
All the stores were closed in his honor,  
And the Reverend Fosdick wrote a stirring sermon for this occasion.

Wreaths and flowerpots covered his grave;  
A memorial to him was built in the park.  
The stores opened the next day as usual;  
The stirring sermon was thrown into the waste basket,  
The flowers withered and died by his grave,  
And vandals defaced the memorial.  
The spring came two months later;  
The chill winds were replaced by warm breezes.  
Birds came and sang over Humphrey G. Pearson's grave.  
But the most remarkable thing was that  
One singular wild rose found its way to the  
Headstone of Humphrey G. Pearson's grave-  
Nature was paying her last respects.

**Tammy Melissa Smith  
Second Place Poetry  
Brookhaven High School**





# *Progress*

Mr. Dickerson watched with interest as the Cadillac rounded the corner of the dirt road and scraped a tree. He was in good humor when the car finally made it up his driveway, having been greeted at the bottom by sprays of mud spun by its tires.

Out stepped the driver, obviously a city person. "Mr. Dickerson?" he inquired.

Mr. Dickerson nodded. "What can I do for you?"

"My name is Rutledge, from Rutledge and Williams Corporation. I have a proposition I think you'll like, being a man of business. Might we go in and discuss it?"

Mr. Dickerson liked propositions and compliments, so he readily agreed. In the living room he asked, "Would you like some coffee, Mr. Rutledge?"

"Yes, thank you. With a bit of sugar, if you will."

Mr. Dickerson went into the kitchen and asked his wife to make two cups of coffee. As he came back to the living room, he saw Mr. Rutledge looking out the window with appreciation at the view. "Quite pretty, isn't it?"

"Beautiful!" Mr. Rutledge exclaimed. He turned and faced Mr. Dickerson excitedly. "This is what I want to talk with you about. Do you know how many people would love to see those mountains, to smell this air? There are not many places left like this, you know."

"My company wants to finance a vacation spot here. We need someone who knows the people, has influence, and who wants to see Rappahannock bloom. This venture will make jobs and give good pay to landowners like yourself. Of course we'll have to make a few adjustments to the countryside, like wider roads." They both smiled. "I promise you, our firm is sound and reputable, and we know this will work. Are you interested, Mr. Dickerson?"

"Yes, indeed. I would love to see Rappahannock get a good deal." He turned and gazed lovingly at the mountains. "What can I do to get in on this?"

"You'll be our representative. It won't take away from your own work and you'll get a salary. Just spread the word about this progress. You can also put up land (we'll pay you, of course) for the campsites. We're planning a large resort. We're calling it Vacation in Paradise. It'll be the most modern resort in the Northeast! I knew you couldn't let such a great chance for you and this county go by, so I brought a contract with me. No hurry to sign; you don't have to if



you don't want to. Look it over tonight and decide. Here's my telephone number. Call me collect when you're ready and I'll work out the details. Thank you very much for your time." Mr. Rutledge glanced at the cold cup of coffee Mrs. Dickerson had set on the table for him. In his enthusiasm he'd forgotten about it. He drained the cup and said, "Thanks for the coffee, too."

Mr. Dickerson looked at the empty cup. He was a bit taken aback at this city man's strange ways and exuberance. "I'll certainly read over the contract. Thank you for coming, Mr. Rutledge."

They walked outside. Mr. Rutledge got into his car and backed carefully down the driveway. Nevertheless, the dried mud on his Cadillac turned chocolate again and the tree gained another line of paint. Turning back inside, Mr. Dickerson was in double good humor as he went to tell his wife the good news.

The rumble of a bulldozer started the Davis' chickens cackling, though they couldn't be heard for the noise. The dishes in the Davis' house rattled with the racket of the building going on down the road. Little Joanne Davis screamed in her crib.

"What good is all this machinery doing?" Mrs. Davis asked her husband as she comforted Joanne. "There's not a moment of peace and quiet anymore around here."

"We'll just have to put up with it. Once the builders are through, everyone'll be doing a bit better. All these city people will have a chance to love this land like we do. Rappahannock will get income in, so we and the tourists will both do well. That's what that Mr. Rutledge keeps saying — progress benefits both sides. It'll get better."

Mrs. Davis put Joanne on the rug and gave her her doll. "I hope so," she said.

Three miles away another tree fell.

"I'm sorry I have to tell you this, Mr. Rutledge, but I've been getting complaints about the number of improvements you're making. It's okay to have asphalt roads and cut down a few trees, but those buildings for your resort look - uh - out of place here. And how you remodeled the old church into a huge block of concrete doesn't set well with some of us. We're not made to have such lofty ceilings and, why, this new preacher won't even let the Christmas tree be put in the sanctuary. He said it would shed. No more ball playing on the church yard or pitching horseshoes. And there aren't any trees within half a mile around it. Can you do something?" Mr. Dickerson only half-listened to the voice at the other end. His eyes were on the mountains.

Mr. Freeman poked along a small branch of the Hughes River, dragging up an old tire and rusted beer and Pepsi cans from the now dirty water. He also picked up the wrappings littering the trail and stuffed them into his bag. He was going to put it into those square green trash receptacles no one used.

A whippoorwill called. He lifted his eyes and searched the tree branches. Bird calls were rare occurrences now. There! He saw it – like the Emperor's nightingale free in the woods. He smiled with memory as he watched it fly off. The hum of freeway traffic filled his ears once more.

**The End**

**Jennifer Day  
First Place Short Story  
Brookhaven High School**

## *The Teacher's Lounge*

"Heck," I said as my friend and I walked down the hall to our lockers. It had been one of "those" days. It had rained all day and showed no intention of stopping. It was also cold.

"Three tests tomorrow," I continued sourly.

"Yeah," my friend replied, "and tonight we have a 'big' basketball game."

I continued, "Just the perfect night to study for a geometry, history, and English test." What a day! I knew it was going to be a good one this morning when I woke up twenty minutes late. Things kept going great, and I had spilt coffee on myself at breakfast and later couldn't find my coat.

I sighed, "That's life," and we both laughed. That was our slogan for everything from forgetting a book to failing the geometry exam. Sometimes it seemed like a very good philosophy.

We changed books and headed for the bus, which was just about to leave. Yes, it had certainly not been my day. I found my seat and sat down. I sat there as the bus slowly began to pull away with the cargo

of screaming kids and thought, "It's all those teachers' fault. Three tests for one day! I'll bet they sit on the couches at break and plot. They all scheme to give tests on the same day."

I could almost hear the teacher in charge begin, "Ladies and gentlemen, let's begin our meeting. Please pass your lists of classes forth. I do hope you all remembered to include the names of all your students."

Teacher A, the one in charge, cleared his throat and muttered to himself, as he went over the lists. Then he spoke up, "Ahah, Mrs. B., how fortunate. If Mr. C. gave a biology test tomorrow, Mr. K. gave a geometry test and Mrs. D. gave an English one, we could get almost the entire Sophomore class." He laughed wickedly. "You know it's their turn this time." The teachers all smiled and a sinister look appeared on their faces.

"That's a good idea," said Miss J. as she drew a deep breath on her cigarette.

"Very well," Mr. H. went on, "I move that the teachers I mentioned earlier give the tests I suggested."

"I second the motion," replied Mrs. P. as she quietly sipped her Tab. They all agreed.

Mr. A. spoke again, apparently very pleased with himself, "This will work out just fine," his voice droned on. "They have a ballgame tonight."

They all laughed mercilessly.

"This meeting is adjourned." The teachers all began to chatter again.

I suppose it's always been like that, though. Somehow I can just picture the early Roman scholars in charge of teaching a group of boys, say nearly the same thing. Of course there would be a few changes. I think theirs would go something like this.

"Let's give a test tomorrow," suggested a scholar, as a slave fed him grapes.

"That's a wonderful idea," said another, a huge fat Roman, as he reclined on an ivory couch. "We have a gladiator fight tonight." Then all of the scholars would laugh.

I could see another meeting tomorrow.

"Well, how did you teachers do?" asked Mr. A.

"Wonderfully," said Miss J. "Fifty percent of the class failed. It's such fun checking off!"

They all laughed and said in unison, "WE WON!"

**Brenda Smith  
First Place Informal Essay  
Brookhaven Academy**





## *The Junior College Collection*

The Division of Humanities at Copiah-Lincoln Junior College sponsored its first junior college competition in the spring of 1973 and the division printed its first MICROCOSM in the fall of 1973. Each year thereafter the MICROCOSM staff has printed two issues.

This year the student writers and the MICROCOSM staff were able to participate in the first statewide junior college competition. In the fall of 1978 the Mississippi Junior College Association approved and funded the Mississippi Junior College Creative Writing Association. This new association sponsored a statewide competition and a writing workshop. Mrs. Edna Earle Crews served as state Competition Coordinator for the competition. Seven Copiah-Lincoln Junior College students, Mr. Durr Walker, Jr., Chairman of the Division of Humanities, and Mrs. Crews attended the workshop at Mississippi Delta Junior College in March. Mr. Walker will serve the association as Arrangement Coordinator for the second annual workshop which Copiah-Lincoln will host in the spring of 1980.

The first and second place winners from Copiah-Lincoln's campus competition qualified for entry in the statewide competition. At the workshop Tommy Douglas and Terrell Oliver received first place awards in the informal and formal essay categories. Anita Weeks won the second place award in the short fiction category for her story "Bubba," which appeared in the 1978 edition of MICROCOSM. Tammy Lyon achieved Honorable Mention in the short fiction category.

The Mississippi Junior College Creative Writing Association will print the first and second place entries in THE JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL which will be published in the fall of 1979. The executive board of the association selected Terry Goetz's design for the cover of the journal.

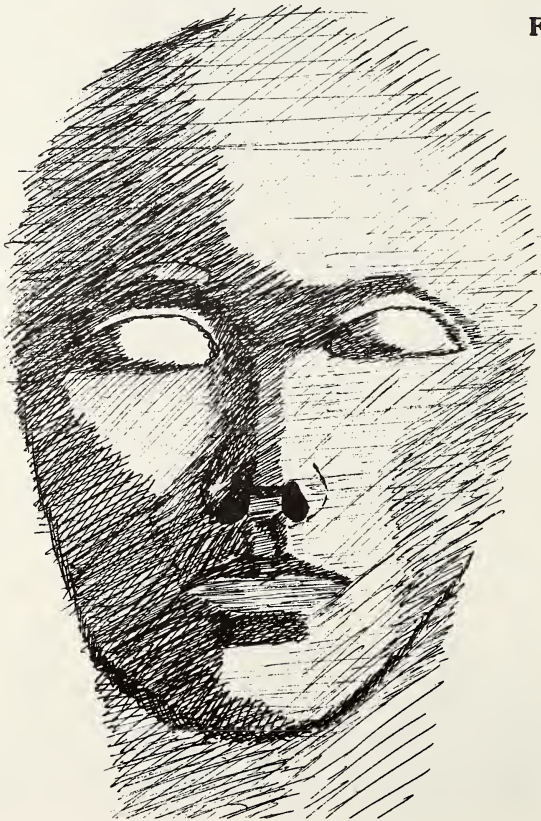


# *Ocean*

At four, I introduced myself to  
That huge mass of water called ocean.  
Amazed at the timelessness and energy of  
The constant, pulsing home of tall ships and sea monsters,  
I stood close to the shore where cold, transparent liquid  
Rushed over my toes.

The sea pulled me away, unresisting.  
Straining to see what could exist out there beyond this,  
I saw tiny, almost invisible, flashes of silver gray light.  
Dolphins, smiling inhabitants of the sea, danced like  
Graceful, slender ballerinas. Arching with fluid movement,  
They, in concert with nature, made my stomach ache with  
Unidentifiable emotion.

**Anita Weeks**  
**First Place Poetry**





## *Under The Pines*

Under the pines, I wrote these lines,  
So I could read the way I feel.  
The dip is in, a part of me,  
And I guess it will always be.  
Could I have been born in the fall  
Of my eighteenth year,  
Or is this new vision in my eye  
Just another tear.  
I'm not a Fogelberg, a Buffet, or a Denver,  
But I'm none the less sincere.  
Oh, I wish that I could say  
What I am and what I want to be.  
If I could play the guitar,  
And if I could sing,  
There'd be nothing more that life could bring,  
There'd be nothing more that I'd ever want to see.

Oh, I'd move to the mountains,  
And there I'd live,  
Taking nothing from life,  
But what I could give.  
I'd be a happy man.

But my life is young,  
Full of pain,  
Too much loss, too little gain.  
I wonder sometimes why I play the game.  
My days grow short, the nights are long.  
I spend my time wondering what went wrong,  
I wish I could get away from here.

Oh, if I could move to mountains,  
If there I could live,  
I'd take nothing more from life  
Than I could give.  
And forever,  
I'd be a happy man.

**Hugh Bush**  
**Second Place Poetry**



## *Lonely Echoes*

The rain softly beats against the window  
as a cloud of breath hides my view.  
I'm standing at constant attention, ever alert,  
waiting for your return home to me,  
only to see distant cars traveling on,  
never turning to meet my watchful gaze.

The drops become heavier as the wind blows  
deep gloomy moans of sadness through the night.  
It aches far down in my soul  
only to be answered by its own echo.  
A tear of aloneness dries on my cheek  
as I realize you will never be home.

**Becky Summers**  
**Third Place Poetry**

## *Defrosted Fantasy Of John Leroy Smith*

He quickly defrosted. One flick of the laser beam switch by an experienced technician and John Leroy (pronounced LeeRoy) Smith thawed out only to find himself the object of amused stares by the two most beautiful women he had ever seen. Quickly realizing (with the aid of his male instinct) that some chivalric, interesting remark must be made, Leroy (as he called himself) said, "Howdy, nice day, ain't it?" This was a very stupid remark as Leroy had neither seen the weather outside nor had he yet (after 200 years) mastered the art of being kind to the English language. With an understanding smile, which undoubtedly hid her grammar-nourished soul which gnashed at his illiterate slang, one of the beauties replied, "Hello, how are you?" Perfect reply.

And so the renewed saga of the life of John Leroy Smith began. Two hundred years ago in a land then inhabited by Democrats, Republicans, Americans, whites, blacks, foreigners, Baptists, cultists, baseball players, hot dog and apple pie eaters, and Chevrolet drivers, Leroy had been an average man of the average age of 45 with the average pay of \$2.95 an hour in the below-average job of ditchdigging. He had been a ditchdigger since he was 30 and only then did he start work when he was kicked off the welfare rolls and given a shovel and an ultimatum—work or take a cut in welfare payments from \$500 to \$480 a month. Leroy, being of unsound mathematical mind, chose to work and ended up with a pay reduction. (The American taxpayer cheered.) Leroy continued in his occupation until he reached 45, noted a knot in his chest, admitted himself to the hospital on his Medicaid card (government neglected to ask for its return and Leroy neglected to offer it) and found he had terminal cancer. Not wanting to die a slow agonizing death by cancer, Leroy had two choices—kill himself (he couldn't afford knives, guns, bullets, ropes, or pills and he couldn't think of any other way) or have his body frozen until a cure could be found. Leroy chose the latter for it was free (and increased welfare benefits to his two girlfriends and fourteen children.). That was 200 years ago. And a cure for cancer was found two weeks after Leroy's frozen body was shoved in the below-zero crypt. Leroy, though not extremely or even moderately intelligent, had enough sense to see that more than two weeks had elapsed. John Leroy Smith woke on the morning of January 9, 2178, with several questions.

After the greetings had been exchanged, Leroy, with a slight shyness, asked, "How'd I get here? What happened? Who are you?" With a comforting pat on the head, one of the technicians began to inform him of his whereabouts and the reasons for this unusual



experience. She, with her glittering fingernails poised for emphasis, said, "Now, Mr. John Leroy Smith, relax, and listen closely to Hijira and me. We will explain." Leroy had never had any compunction to do anything other than relax; consequently, he didn't prove unwilling to do so today.

Hijira, the slender luscious looking blonde who had very warm palms, which were now placed over his nose defrosting his somewhat congealed sinuses, began, "John Leroy Smith, you were born on February 9, 1933, frozen on August 6, 1978, and revived today which is January 9, 2178."

With a shrug of both fear and ignorance, Leroy muttered, "2178? Whatever happened to 1978 and Saturday nights at the pool hall and free beer on Thursday nights and making out and . . ."

"Calm yourself. You mustn't overexert your body . . ."

"But how'd I get here? What happened?" quizzed Leroy.

Melnesha, the breathtaking brunette with pulsating emerald eyes, explained, "The explanation is very simple. The building which housed your crypt was destroyed in a universal earthquake and it was not until two weeks ago that a RushAm archaeological team dug up your storage container."

"RushAm?" asked Leroy, who had trouble deciding if RushAm was a vegetable, invading Indian tribe, or a brand of whiskey.

"Yes," continued Hijira, "RushAm—it is the civilization of this era."

Melnesha added, "By the time the first and last of the Carterian dynasty, James Earl, died, America had become Russia and Russia had become America. Soon RushAm became the new communist civilization with a ruler being set over the Russian division and a ruler over the American section."

Picturing the wholesale slaughter of fellow Americans and the burning of the flag, the White House, and food stamps, Leroy, with tears in his eyes, mumbled, "I bet those rotten communists killed everybody—even my little two-year-old."

"Kill?! Why no—no guns were fired!" assured Hijira. She continued, "There was no bloodshed at all—it was all very peaceful."

With an astonished expression, Leroy asked, "How? No great atomic blasts? No missiles? No late night raids . . ."

Melnesha finished his sentence for him, "No war. By the end of the Carterian dynasty, James Earl had given all of America to the Russians. He was extremely nice about the whole thing."

"Yes," added Hijira, "he even donated extra millions of dollars for funding improvements of the American civilization."

"No Mississippi?" queried the Southern born and reared gentleman.

Hijira answered, "No Mississippi. I'm afraid the state went insolvent . . ."

With a look of well-defined ignorance, Leroy questioned, "Insolwhat?"

"Insolvent," continued Melnesha, "is another word for declaring bankruptcy—and that's what Mississippi did."

"But how?" asked Leroy. "I thought Mississippians could afford any tax hike. Who done it?"

With a sigh, Hijira said, "John Leroy Smith, it's really a long story—but the truth is that the taxpayers became so burdened that a massive crippling stroke hit most of the hard-working taxpayers."

"It was so terrible—they just gave up the fight when the schools did what they did—soon all the taxpayers died because when they refused to pay their taxes, what other reason did they have to live?" added Melnesha.

Leroy caught hold of the word "school" and quickly asked, "What did the school have to do with it?"

"Well," continued Melnesha, "with all the financially provided school meals, the taxpayers became so disgusted. Schools served breakfast, dinner, and orange juice at break—all free of course—to needy children. It was really a nice idea—the children could bring along their potato chips and candy bars and on certain days, they were given the leftovers to take home to their mothers or fathers, depending upon who kept them. It was so generous."

Hijira added, "But the really wonderful thing about the whole setup was that only the needy children got the free meals—the taxpayers with children still had to buy their meals and their orange juice was 25¢ a cup. It was all so fair."

Leroy still didn't understand, but his children were eating free 200 years ago—why complain?

Leroy simply could not believe it. Here he was in a strange room with two dazzling but mysterious women, no civilized clothing to his name, no money to buy some clothes, no Mississippi, no Mississippi taxpayer, no food stamps to purchase food and . . .

Melnesha interrupted his thoughts, "John Leroy Smith, don't look so despairing—we shall find you a job and you will become a productive, resourceful RushAmanian."

With as much dignity as he could muster, Leroy said, "And what makes you think I will work?"

"Everyone does—it's that simple," replied Hijira.

"No food stamps at all?" Leroy asked boldly.

"No."

"No welfare either?" Leroy asked a little more quietly.

"No."

"No Medicaid?" he muttered weakly.

"No—nothing for anyone—except work."

With a dejected slouch, Leroy asked the one question that had plagued him 200 years ago and still greatly bothered him, "Is the work hard?"

"Not at all. We have just the position for you," replied Melnesha as she patted his trembling arm.

"The qualifications are many," continued Hijira, "but you have them all."

Sucking his somewhat frozen chest in, Leroy glowed as he asked, "And what qualifications is they that I got?"

"A very slight IQ and a feeling that the world owes you allegiance."

"Well, I reckon I ain't too terrible smart and my mama always said the world owed me a living—I guess that's the same as allegiance," Leroy answered brightly.

"You must be able to withstand criticism and live in constant fear of being caught in a trap," cautioned Hijira.

"Oh, I can handle that. I never minded them hard workers from shooting me a bunch of bull about being a bum and I always hid my Schlitz and imported cigars real well when the welfare inspector came by so I guess that qualifies me," Leroy said with satisfaction.

Melnesha then said, "But, John Leroy Smith, you must risk being killed as you will be despised by many and your children will have few friends. Yours will be the most talked about job of them all."

With a shrug, Leroy said, "I can handle it. I never risked death any more than the night when I took Luther Smiley's wife out and got her drunk on wine and I can't keep count of my children no how so the fewer brats to bother me—the better. And I ain't never been worried about no gossip."

Hijira cautioned, "You must be very generous in your gifts as you will be rich in this new existence. People will expect you to be willing to give away not only money and food to friends who you wish to help, but you must also donate land and funds to enemies for protection."

"Well," drawled Leroy, who was beginning to see visions of himself stuffing on fried chitterlings, French bread, and mashed



potatoes, "I guess I can give away some of what I got if it will protect me and help me in my job."

With a low, solemn voice, Melnesha said, "But, John Leroy Smith, this job will open you to public ridicule and none but the greediest and most ignorant, who see this position as a great goal with much money and power, seek it. Are you sure you'll accept this job?"

"Yes'm," said Leroy, "I got what it takes. I reckon I'm just as good as anybody else who has had a shot at this job."

Hijira said slowly, "Oh, John Leroy Smith, you poor, poor, deluded man. You have just accepted the position of President of the American segment of RushAm."

**Tammy Lyon**  
**Honorable Mention**  
**Short Fiction**  
**State Junior College**  
**Competition**



## Alice Crump

Why on this particular morning, did I walk across the road and down the hill to Alice Crump's house? I really don't know. After drinking my morning coffee, it seemed as though an invisible force just drew me to the dilapidated, old, two-room house Alice had occupied while working for my Uncle Louie and Aunt Mildred.

Silently, standing there looking at the house, I didn't see the overgrown shrubs, the vine-covered, crumbling chimney, and the porch strewn with tools. Instead, it seemed as though an old negress still rocked in her chair on the porch. I could see Alice just as plain as could be, sitting there wearing a long print dress covered with a stiffly-starched, white apron with her head wrapped turban-style in a piece of brightly-flowered calico, looking at me with those warm, doe-colored eyes.

Alice had two gold teeth right in front. She always wore short, broom straws in her ears. When asked why she didn't wear earrings, her reply was, "Why, Honey Chile, I wears 'um to keep the holes in mah ears from growin' up." Actually, the only jewelry she ever wore was a plain, gold, wedding band. No spangles or gee-gars for Alice—she dressed conservatively.

On weekdays she wore her head-cloth like a cocoon-shaped turban; on Sundays the cloth around her head was changed to black and she allowed the ends of the wrapping to flow not unlike that of a nun's habit.

As I recall, Alice didn't have many vices—except for dipping Sweet Garrett snuff during the daytime and in the evenings after her chores were finished—she would sit on her tiny porch and smoke her pipe. This was the time when my Cousin Judy and I could go "visit" Alice at her house. I would sit on one side of the single doorstep, my cousin on the other side, both of us waiting expectantly for Alice to tell us one of her tales.

The procedure of filling her pipe with tobacco was a ritual within itself. My uncle would give Alice cigars which she would crush into tiny pieces to use in her pipe. We watched impatiently as the pipe was slowly and meticulously filled, tamped, and filled again. Then Alice would settle back in her rocker, puff about three times, and begin her story.

She would tell amazing things—like the time she got saved and was baptized. According to Alice, when the preacher put her under the water in the creek, her teeth got hung on a floating root. She had to stay under water the entire time while some of the brethren went

back to the church for a knife to cut loose the root. For days, endless days, we tried to calculate how she could have held her breath for such a long time. But, if Alice said it—it must be so.

Again, she impressed us when she cured Cousin Little Louie's nose bleed. It never failed—when we got in the middle of a good game of chase or hide-and-seek—his nose would bleed. Finally, one day Alice put a house key on a string and hung it around his neck with the key hanging down his back. She said, "T's gwine stop that chile's nose from bleedin',"—and she did.

How I loved the times when Alice invited Cousin Judy and me to come into her house. It was an exciting experience! On the mantle was an orange bowl (she had gotten this as a bonus from a box of oatmeal) filled with cellophane-wrapped, multi-colored candies. First, we always got a handful of candy, unwrapped a piece, plunked it into our mouths, and proceeded to relish the sheer thrill of just being in Alice's house. There were so many interesting things to see. In the corner was a washstand on which she kept her pink rosebud pitcher and bowl for "neatin' up." At least three beds, of sorts, were in the main room. We always wondered what she had in her mammoth-sized trunk—but this was off limits for us—so the mystery remained unsolved. I think, however, that not seeing what was in the trunk just added to the pure pleasure of being in her house. As children we would imagine all sorts of strange and sinister items located within the confines of that trunk.

And to think of the smells we encountered during our visits . . . such as the aroma of pipe tobacco, old firewood, lilac talc (the kind in a lavender tin can), and the string of garlic hanging on the kitchen door. It was heavenly.

A strange occurrence would take place nearly every week-end. My cousin and I would hide in the hedge to watch the approach of a tall, stately, black man dressed in a suit with a white shirt and tie. He always carried a very large Bible under his arm. Arriving on Saturday around noon, the Reverend Adams would spend the entire week-end with Alice. Aunt Mildred always told us to leave Alice and her friend alone and to not bother them, but if we spied long enough, sometimes we would catch a glimpse of him reading the big Bible to her. Cousin Judy and I always wondered why Alice needed saving again, especially after she nearly drowned getting saved that first time.

On Sunday morning Reverend Adams and Alice would exit to go to church. It was on this occasion that Alice wore her black turban with the ends flowing behind her. That afternoon the reverend would leave until the next week-end.



Once we asked Alice about the Reverend Adams' visits and she said, "I's just letting' my little light shine helpin' along the work of the Lord." So—that ended that.

One Sunday morning, when she was eighty-nine years old, Alice didn't show up to cook breakfast. They found her sitting in her rocker in the front room of her house. Alice had died quietly and had gone to meet the Lord. I've been told that the Reverend Adams gave her eulogy.

My journey into the past ended abruptly as my mother called me to breakfast. Turning, and stopping only to unlock the gate, I walked slowly back up the hill toward my mother's house. As I started across the highway, it seemed as though, once again, I could hear Alice Crump say, "Sweet Chile, now you be careful of them cars—you heah?"

**Peggy Byrd**  
**Third Place Short Fiction**



## J. D.

My uncle J. D. one summer afternoon did a very foolish thing to his son J. D., Jr., when Henry Evans and I were visiting his and my aunt one Friday in a small south Mississippi town. My uncle had been drinking heavily before this act took place. He was sitting in the humid sunshine playing around with his brown and slightly rusted gun. J. D., Jr. later came out into the hot air where my uncle was lying. I could hear voices of anger coming from the unpainted plank porch. Suddenly came the crack of a gun. "That'll learn you to mess with me, boy." My uncle had intentionally shot his son in the foot. After he was shot, J. D., Jr. started to run. The pain in my cousin's leg must have rushed all the way up his spine. I ran to help him but after I got close to him I could hear him saying, "Oh, Harry. I feel dizzy." Just as I got to him, he fainted.

The rest of the family and I helped him into the house while someone called an ambulance. I could almost feel the pain that went through his body. The blood was gushing out in bright red spurts. Soon the ambulance came and took Jr. to the hospital. He awoke and found himself in a semi-private hospital room. He told me later that he could feel the hard rocks slipping under his feet. As he was talking about the tragic mishap, the doctor came in and told him that the leg would have to be taken off because he had lost a special bone in his foot. With his artificial limb, J. D., Jr. has learned to ride his bike again and he is even taking swimming lessons. Uncle J. D. never left the hospital while Jr. was there. Most of the time he sat there with his head in his hands moaning and crying. A year has passed and Uncle J. D. hasn't yet taken another drink.

**Chester Chism**  
**Third Place Informal Essay**

## *My Grandmother: The "Doctor Lady"*

Since I was old enough to recall, I have always loved and admired my grandmother. Because in her own loving way, she has had a heart for others as well as for her own children and family. Especially when I was growing up, she was known as the "Doctor Lady" because she had a remedy for almost any illness that was in existence. (If she didn't have it right then, Mu'deah would always find a way to come up with one.) This was a title given to her, even before my younger brothers, sister, cousins, and I were born.

Because our town and community had only one or two doctors from time to time and because we were poor and could not go to a larger town to see a doctor, we had to rely upon Mu'deah for medical aid. Relying on Mu'deah was a big help to our family. Mu'deah believed her old folk remedies were a lot better than the doctor's. One main reason was that the doctor's medicine was chemically tested and made. Mu'deah's medicine was from herbs, spices and leaves gathered from around the house.

We were brought up on my grandmother's remedies and scared to death of sickness because we didn't want to taste any of her home made medicine. Though we were always scared and we knew it would taste horrible, we knew it would cure whatever it was that we had. It was never safe to cough or have a common cold around her, because she would go to the garden to gather fresh onions, brew them with a portion of sugar and give them to us for our cold. She called this onion syrup. In order to cure our stomach aches, she would mix together turpentine and sugar in a big tablespoon and made us swallow it immediately. If we didn't, it would probably never go down. To overcome a tight chest cold and a hoarse voice, Mu'deah would hunt down her tallow, mix it together with soda and vaseline. After Mu'Deah rubbed us down with this folk mixture during the night, by morning our chests were unclogged and our voices were back to normal, no more scratchy throats. After this overnight rubdown we hated the atmosphere of the whole room—smothered with menthol. She could cure a simple ear ache by breaking several pieces of fat meat, which produced a certain amount of oil, by mixing the slightly cooled oil with a little water, and pouring it into a small bottle for safe keeping. It took only two or three drops of this Doctor Lady remedy in each ear, packed with a piece of cotton, to get rid of the pain, and restore our hearing to normal.

Mu'deah has always enjoyed the outdoors. Many times she would



go into the woods to gather all sorts of wild plants, which she cooked and made us drink a cup a week. She did this to take care of our need for vitamins, which we could not afford to buy. If by chance one of us had boils or blisters, she went to the barn to get an egg from one of her hen's nest. She then broke the egg and took out the skin in the shell, which she placed on the infected area. She tightened a clean white piece of cloth over the sore and left it there for two or three days. After she thought the time was right, she removed the cloth, and we could see no sign of a boil or blister. Mu'deah's remedies were just that good.

During the summer, most of us would go barefoot, and many times we would cut our feet. Mu'deah would simply cut up a piece of raw salted pork and put it directly over the wounded area. The Doctor Lady stated, "This will kill germs and stop the flow of blood." It may have looked, "YULK," but it worked.

For the prevention of falling hair or baldness, Mu'deah would encourage us to wash our hair in corn shuck tea, made by boiling shucks from the ears of corn, and to rinse our hair in rain water. This seemed, to us, a strange remedy, but anything from Mudeah's medicine book usually worked.

Yes, my grandmother was quite a lady, and she still is. She never felt embarrassed or discouraged when others criticized her for having the talent and ability to create and produce her own home remedies. Mu'deah still keeps her medical prescriptions in her head as well as in her heart.

**Tracy McCaskill**  
**First Place Informal Essay**



## *Granddaddy's Garden*

Inflation has caused food prices in the United States to soar to unbearable heights. Many people have started raising their own crops to try to beat the price crunch. Even if one has all the materials to produce crops, still failure can result from lack of knowledge. Maybe these new farmers could learn from my grandfather, Linfield Lenox Oglesby, Sr., who continues to save by farming on his centennial farm.

Granddaddy has a special way for planting and raising his crops. Long before the seeds are to be planted, he fires up his red Massey-Ferguson. He rides all day long on his tractor discing and preparing the ground. Only when the ground is free of dirt clods, is the ground ready for the next planting season.

After granddaddy finishes working the ground, he relaxes on the couch in the living room reading *The Farmer's Almanac*. The almanac tells the proper times for the planting of the different crops. "Only when the almanac says so, do you do so," Granddaddy says.

All winter long he sits by the kitchen window watching the rain outside.

Finally spring and the day for planting arrives. After granddaddy has rowed up the garden, he goes to the deep freeze and takes out the seeds. Then he goes out to the barn to coat the seeds with crow repellent before taking them to the garden.

Granddaddy is very peculiar about planting his seeds. He might let one of his grandsons plant the seeds, but not without his supervision. "Put seven watermelon seeds in that hole," he says. "Don't dig that one too deep, Lynn; Tommy, you go get some more triple thirteen." After we plant the last seed we go to the pump house and wash off. We load up in his 1963 model black Ford pickup and go off to the courthouse for a soda pop. "They're in the bottle there, boys. And I might see Archie to ask him about fixing the car," he adds. But that is not the real reason. Cokes are only 10¢ at the courthouse and a quarter everywhere else.

We watch the seeds grow into vegetable plants and try to wake up early to hoe the weeds. And then there were always crows. Our main battle was to keep the crows out of the corn patch, out of the watermelon patch, out of every patch. Linfield, (what we call him behind his back), spends ninety-nine per cent of his time worrying about crows. He gets up before daylight and sits in the garden with the shotgun waiting for a crow to fly a little bit too close. Boom!

Boom! "Terry, fetch that crow and hang him on a pole. That'll teach them dadburn black devils!" he exclaims.

Finally comes the harvesting time. Off to the field we go in the old black truck to gather the crops. Granddaddy goes through the rows and places the ripe crops in the middles. Then Lynn, Terry, and I gently place them in old feed sacks. "After dinner we'll go peddle them at Mile Branch," he says. "You'd better throw on an extra melon for Cush." Cush is the old deaf black man who does odd jobs for Granddaddy.

Farming is an all year matter for Granddaddy. It is not just a hobby; it is in his blood. He is good at farming because he is knowledgeable and devoted to farming. Knowledge is important, but Granddaddy knows if he does not devote his time to caring for his garden, he will spend more than he saves.

**Tommy Douglas**  
**First Place Informal Essay**  
**State Junior College Competition**





# *A Literary Analysis Of*

## *"A Noiseless Patient Spider"*

Philosophers for ages have tried to grasp the mystery of life, and in Walt Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider" this searching appears. Poets have written their thoughts in prose and poetry for many centuries. Almost everything in nature has been to them, at one time or another, an incentive to write their ideas on the purpose and "whys" of life. This poem is remarkable in both meaning and form. In "A Noiseless Patient Spider," Walt Whitman expresses how a human spider is symbolic to life's mystery through his depiction of the development of the spider's web, through his choice of vocabulary, and by his comparison of man and insect.

The construction of the spider's web symbolizes life's mystery of mankind. Man is reaching out his soul to find an answer to the unknown just as a spider is shooting out its strand into the unexplored. The spider, like all insects, acts on instinct to construct its intricate web. Furthermore, man also has an innate quality of curiosity about how he evolved and where he is going. In this poem Mr. Whitman exposes the solitude of the tiny spider by stating, "... where on a little promontory it stood isolated . . . to explore the vacant vast surroundings." In comparison to man, he too is one being in an infinite creation. The web's actual development seems unending as its filament tirelessly speeds out. Likewise, our souls unendlessly search for an answer and the spider's never-ending filament symbolizes man's tiny place in the vastness of the universe, the unknown.

Life's mystery is also emphasized in this poem by Mr. Whitman's choice of connotation. When wishing to express the unending search of the spider's filament and the man's soul, Mr. Whitman uses phrases, such as, "vacant vast surroundings" and "measureless oceans of space." The ductile anchor indicates both of their abilities to reach into the unknown, not knowing where it will lead. Just as one's soul reaches into the mystic universe, so does the filament of the spider venture from its environment. The spider, being on a little promontory, shows its view of vastness much like the universe is to man. The gossamer thread reveals the fragility of the cobweb and one's soul. To conclude, through Mr. Whitman's choice of vocabulary their unending search, their ability of hope, their

isolation, and their fragility conveys the mood and meaning of the poem.

Mr. Whitman also compares the man and insect by showing that they both have certain characteristics in common. For instance, the two species are both isolated and detached whether it be building a web or finding the answer to eternity. To sum up, Walt Whitman sees the gropings of the soul in the toiling of the patient spider. The soul of man is "seeking the spheres to connect them" just as the spider is seeking to launch its filament in hopes of attachment.

Through the development of the spider's web, through the author's choice of vocabulary, and by unifying the man and spider, Walt Whitman effectively expresses how a human spider can be significant to life's mysteries and questions. Although a humble bit of nature may seem impertinent to discussion of man's life, a spider also thrives on survival. There are many ways to see the "wonders of creation" and through Walt Whitman's eyes they are seen in a spider and its cobweb.

**Debbie York**  
**First Place Formal Essay**

# *The Role of Literature, Art, and Music* *in Agatha Christie's Mysteries*

To understand the foremost mystery writer, one must look at the life of Agatha Christie. Ms. Christie studied voice in Paris as a young girl and had ambitions of becoming a concert pianist. She occasionally, as a young girl, wrote poems. Because of her cultural background, she had an understanding of literature, art, and music. This may be one reason for the recurrence throughout her eighty-seven books of the idea of literature, art, and music which appear several different ways for special dramatic effects in her mysteries.

Literature appears in Ms. Christie's books in the form of quotations from famous poems, plays, and books. Lines from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott,"

"The mirror crack'd from side to side  
"The curse is come upon me, . . .'  
God in His mercy lend her grace, The Lady of Shalott,"

reveal in **The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side** the identity of the murderer of the once beautiful actress and a partial justification for this murder. A line from **Macbeth**,

"By the pricking of my thumbs  
Something wicked this way comes,"

indicates that something indeed is about to come in the book **By the Pricking of My Thumbs**. Another allusion to **Macbeth**, "Your evil shall not triumph. In the end, it is Macbeth who will be round the bend," also serves as a valuable clue in **The Pale Horse** to the solution of the mystery. Ms. Christie uses lines from James Elroy Flecker's "Gates of Damascus" in **Postum of Tate**. These lines

"From great gates has the city of Damascus . . .  
Postum of Fate, the desert gate, Disaster's  
Cavern, Fort of Fear . . . That silence where the  
birds are dead yet something pipeth like a bird?"

help develop the main idea of the mystery. Likewise for **The Pale Horse**, Ms. Christie borrows a verse from the King James version of



the Bible. She takes verse 8 from chapter 6 of Revelation and centers a murder of a group of unrelated people in the book around the verse. The quotation,

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse;  
and his name that sat on him was death,  
and hell followed with him  
And power was given unto them . . .  
to kill with sword, . . .”

serves as a device to make the people in the small English community believe that there was some fantastic trafficking with the devil. The truth behind these murders was discovered to be simple tricks done for money and human life. Another quotation from *Macbeth*, “Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?” is the foreshadowing of tricks that the old man has in store for his relatives before his murder in *A Holiday for Murder*, also called *Murder for Christmas*. An allusion from William Blake’s *Auguries of Innocence*, “Every night and every morn . . . Some are born to Endless Night,” becomes the central element for a series of bizarre deaths that occur at Gipsy’s Acre in *Endless Night*.

Ms. Christie, also, uses a fictitious lady novelist in several of her books as a mirrored reflection of herself. Ms. Ariadne Oliver appears throughout the books munching on apples, as indirect reference to Ms. Christie, who claims to have thought of the ideas of her books by munching on green apples. Similarly, Ms. Oliver serves as a detective in helping solve the murders in books such as *Elephants Can Remember*, *Cards on the Table*, *The Pale Horse*, and *Dead Man’s Folly*.

Books are, in fact, valuable clues to the detectives in several of Ms. Christie’s books. In the *Murder at Hazelmoore*, Inspector Narracott is able to learn about Captain Trevelyan, the victim of the story, through the study of the captain’s book collection. This knowledge leads him to the murderer. Tuppence and Tommy, two of Ms. Christie’s minor detectives, find a reference to a murder in one of the books in their new library. The information is underlined in red ink in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Black Arrow*.

Besides literature art plays a valuable role in Ms. Christie’s writings. In the book *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, a painting of a house on a canal serves as a vital clue for Tommy and Tuppence Beresford to find a solution to the mystery. In *Murder After Hours*, also called *The Hollow*, a brilliant woman artist plays a role in a murder at a beautiful English manor. Ms. Christie refers indirectly

to her knowledge of art in describing the studies of young English girls at a boarding house in the book **Cat Among the Pigeons**.

In about seven of her books music appears as nursery rhymes. In **One, Two, Buckly My Shoe**, also called the **Patriotic Murders**, Poirot sings this rhyme and in doing so finds the key to this puzzle. Each line of the rhyme in **Ten Little Indians**, also called **And Then There Were None**, indicates the method of each that is going to happen. The last line serves as the solution of this bizarre series of murders. The murders in **A Pocket Full of Rye** occur in the manner described in the rhyme itself with only a few minor variations. This invaluable clue to the solution of this mystery comes in the line "Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie." This same line appears in a shorter story entitled "Four and Twenty Blackbirds" from the collection of short stories entitled **The Mousetrap**, using the same general idea. The rhyme of the three blind mice, also, appears in a story by the same title in **The Mousetrap**. The central idea of the mystery evolves around this rhyme. Another nursery rhyme appears in **Hickory Dickory Death** in which the lines "The clock struck one, The mouse ran down, Hickory dickory dock," serve as the basis for a murder that occurs at a boarding house for students.

Music sometimes plays a passive role in Ms. Christie's mysteries as it does in **They Do It With Mirrors**. A discussion about old-fashioned musicians leads the detectives to the piano stool where the music scores of less frequently played pieces are kept. Because of this reference to music, the detective finds the murder weapon hidden in the piano stool.

In **Hercule Poirot's Christmas**, also entitled **Murder for Christmas**, music serves as the means of eliminating some of the major suspects and leads to the identity of the guilty party. Thus, when David plays a death march on the piano, Poirot knows who is the guilty party.

The use of literature, art, and music frequently serve as valuable instruments for Ms. Christie in writing her best sellers. These three play varying roles in the solution to each book. Her use of literature ranges from quotations of famous writers of plays, poems, and books to a catalog of books that the characters have read that are valuable to the solution of the mystery. Art allows Ms. Christie a means of expressing her knowledge and sometimes serves as a basis for a murder. Music appears basically as nursery rhymes that have murders centered around them. Therefore, these three play an often different, but important, role in her mystery novels.

Terrell Oliver

First Place Formal Essay

-32- State Junior College Competition

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## *Progress?*

Year after year, man's need for industry and progress has deprived us of hundreds upon hundreds of valuable lush, green forests, abundant with plantlife and wildlife. Once, the treeline across the open meadow in my hometown of Ocean Springs during the fall burst into life, creating a once-in-a-lifetime scene that as a child I had the privilege of enjoying. The vivid colors of brown, orange, red, and yellow were displayed proudly from the assorted variety of trees, all in a formation as if in a pageant awaiting the final decision. The tall, slender pines stood in the background to give contrast with their greenery. The maples short but stout stood in the front, showing to the world their bright and vivid oranges, reds, and yellows. To the side, two massive oaks wise with age stood proudly watching over the others.

As night approached, the picture became even more spectacular, as the brilliant orange sun sank into the west. It seemed to peer through the separations of the trees to create a silhouetting effect that artists dream of painting. The last golden rays, not hindered by the trees, continued on their way to find a final stopping point on the millions of waving strands of grass moving gently with the warm breeze that blew from the south.

In the midst of the trees, silhouetted images of birds darted to and fro as they prepared themselves for a night's sleep. At my feet, a small fieldmouse scurried to its sheltered hole to store food for the onset of winter. It then briskly moved out of its hole again only to disappear in the under-brush, probably wondering whether it would survive until spring. It was here that I spent most of my childhood, growing up with the trees, and running through the under-brush, as I passed my days. Unfortunately, in the name of progress, America's beautiful countrysides such as this one are being destroyed and torn away to construct super-highways, nuclear plants, housing developments, and factories. I grow angry because of such actions, though they are supposedly in the name of progress. The once bountiful meadow where I grew up is now hidden beneath layers of pavement, cement, or brick. All is gone from the meadow save one little maple sapling, standing lonely and desolate, struggling for its life.

What is to become of the little fieldmouse and others of its kind? Will they simply move from one location to another till they have no where else to go? And what shall become of the birds? Shall they continue relocating until they have lost all zest for life, and one by

warmth of the sun and the moistness of the newly fallen rain. The voices haunt us from the barren hillsides and the sodded medians of our super-highways. Their aborted images reflect in the cold windows of today's factories.

**Scott Rogers**  
**Third Place Formal Essay**



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